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ABSTRACT

Reading teachers and specialists have a difficult task in determining which components need to be emphasized in a quality reading program. Vital goals need to be achieved, experiences and activities must capture learner interest, and sequence in learning and organization of subject matter must guide student integration of knowledge. The scope of the reading curriculum could be broadened to include three categories of objectives--understandings, skills, and attitudes. Attitudinal goals, not skills objectives, are paramount in a quality individualized reading program. A language experience approach, utilizing pupils' listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabularies, allows pupils and not the teacher to sequence content. Reading abilities are emphasized in all academic areas in the fused or integrated curriculum and the synthesizing of the inductive method with deduction can guide optimal student achievement. (Contains three references.) (CR)

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THE READING CURRICULUM, ISSUES AND DESIGN

ED 396 251

Reading teachers and specialists indeed have a difficult task in determining which components need to be emphasized in a quality reading program. Problem areas need to be identified in the teaching of reading. A careful study of relevant content is needed to offer possible answers to the identified problem areas. The answers or possible solutions may come from reading manuscripts in professional journals, visiting innovative classrooms, viewing selected audio-visual aid presentations, and interviewing resource personnal as well as consultants specializing in the teaching of reading.

Tentative answers to identified problems need to follow guidelines emphasized by the psychology of learning or educational psychology. These standards include:

1. Vital goals need to be achieved. Reading representing the first r (reading, writing, and arithmetic) and being a basic in the curriculum has its own goals for students to attain in word recognition skills as well as comprehension abilities.
2. experiences and activities must capture learner interest.
3. sequence in learning advocates each pupil achieve optimally in reading.
4. organization of subject matter must guide students to relate and integrate learnings obtained.
5. evaluation techniques need to appraise that which is worthwhile for learners to attain.

Each recommended possible solution related to a problem needs to be tested within the framework of actual teaching - learning situations. Acceptance, modification, or rejection of a possible solution is then based upon its effect in guiding student achievement and progress.

Scope in the Reading Curriculum

What should students achieve as a result of reading instruction? The answer to this question pertains to scope in the curriculum.

Understanding goals could receive major emphasis in the reading curriculum.

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Thus, pupils acquiring vital subject matter becomes paramount in significance. Content for pupils to learn should be relevant and useful. Subject matter attained by learners then might well consist of main ideas and generalizations. These broad ideas need to be supported by important facts. Within each main idea, students should acquire vital concepts. Pupils need to be guided to relate concepts in order that main ideas and generalizations can be attained.

To further emphasize scope in the reading curriculum, the teacher may place major emphasis upon skills rather than understandings goals. Pupils might then be guided to achieve objectives emphasizing critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving. Prerequiste skills would stress proficiency in word recognition and identification in order that appropriate comprehension in reading may be a relevant and result.

A third school of thought in education involving scope might emphasize attitudinal goals receive major emphasis within the framework of teaching - learning situations. To develop recommended attitudes toward reading, the teacher needs to have students

(a) develop and maintain interests.
(b) attach meaning pertaining to content read.
(c) experience success in ongoing lessons and units.
(d) achieve optimally based on individual rates of progress.
(e) achieve purpose or reasons for reading.

The scope of the reading curriculum could be broadened to include all three categories of objectives - understandings, skills, and attitudes. However, a classroom teacher may well be inclined to stress one category of objectives more so than the other two in reading. The question then arises which category should receive paramount emphasis in the curriculum?

A further issue in society emphasizes pupils achieving competency in the basics, namely reading, writing, and arithmetic. The first r (reading) is

useful in any academic area, be it social studies, science, mathematics, and literature. To develop proficiency involving the basics in reading, diverse word recognition techniques have stood the test of time and need to be mastered by pupils. These abilities include using phonics, syllabication, structural analysis, configuration clues, and context clues. Picture clues and their utilization in word recognition techniques may well be stressed by the teacher of young learners in a reading readiness program.

Also, in a basics curriculum, a student should be guided by the teacher to develop proficiency in comprehension skills. These skills include reading to comprehend main ideas, generalizations, directions, sequential ideas, and facts as well as to read analytically and in an imaginative manner.

Toward the other end of the continuum, individualized reading may claim few or no basics (essentials) in the curriculum. Advocates of individualized reading believe that each pupil needs to select his/her own materials sequentially. The teacher intervenes only if a student cannot settle down to select and read a book. After completing the reading material, the teacher needs to evaluate the involved pupil's achievement. Appraisal procedures involve cooperative endeavors between the reader and the teacher.

Specific skills in reading may need to be emphasized if the involved pupil reveals a need. The need may be specific as associating a phoneme with a grapheme. Or, the need may be general such as utilizing appropriate phrasing while the pupil is actually reading. However, individualized reading does not emphasize predetermined objectives for students to achieve in reading. Rather, enjoyment and purpose are the very broad goals in an individualized program of reading instruction. Thus, it appears that attitudinal goals, not skills objectives are paramount in a quality individualized reading program. Advocates believe that the concepts of enjoyment and purpose will hurdle many difficulties

in word recognition techniques and comprehension skills. Thus, how much emphasis should be placed upon basics as compared to a curriculum of affect in which the latter stresses quality feelings being developed by pupils toward reading is a major issue. A skills or basics approach believes that sequential behaviors need to be developed by students in identification of words as well as in the area of comprehension. Advocates of individualized reading believe that content of interest and purpose to the reader is paramount in any reading program.

Doll[1] wrote:

> . . . However, the problem of scope does not end with listing subjects and activities. Each subject and activity may grow entirely out of bounds. For example, the language arts as a subject field was once heavy in reading and writing alone. Then, speaking as a specific art and skill assumed increased prominence. Now, listening, and to some extent the history and structure of language, has been added to the language arts area. Spelling and penmanship once took much time without being related very consciously to written composition. Now, in the face of multiple tasks to be performed within the language arts, they may be suffering from underemphasis. Problems of too broad scope indicate again that the world of education is not afflicted with a scarcity of knowledge; rather it needs perspective in fitting a profusion of knowledge into limited periods of time at varied stages in the development of learners.
>
> The scope of the curriculum can perhaps be kept within bounds most readily by cultivating allegiance to carefully selected objectives and to these objectives only...

Sequence in the Curriculum

Proper order of experiences for students is highly significant in order that optimal achievement is possible. How might content be sequenced for students?

Programmed learning may be utilized. Programmed learning can be emphasized in either textbook or software and microcomputer approaches. In programmed learning the involved student reads a few lines or a paragraph, and

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[1]Ronald C. Doll. Curriculum Improvement: Decision Making and Process. Fifth edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1982, page 144.

answers a test item as provided by the programmer. The student's response is checked with that provided by the programmer. If the answer is correct, reward or reinforcement is in evidence. If incorrect, the right answer ultimately is suppied by the programmer and the learner is able to go on to the next linear programmed item. By being supplied with the correct answer, the student is able to progress sequentially as was true of the learner who initially responded correctly the first time when responding to a test item covering content read.

In programmed reading, the sequence of steps involved in learning are read, respond, and check. This procedure is utilized again and again in programmed textbooks or computer assisted instruction (CAI). Students in field tested programmed materials are correct approximately ninety percent of the time. The ordered steps of learning are very small in complexity when the pupil moves forward on programmed items in ascending order of complexity. Reinforcement is a key concept in programmed learning in that a pupil should be successful in each step of progress. A logical reading curriculum is in evidence when a programmer arranges the sequence of items for pupils. Success in each ordered step is important in terms of student learning.

Toward the other end of the continuum, a language experience approach in the teaching of reading may be emphasized. Thus, based on an experience, using concrete or semi-concrete materials, the involved young learner presents content orally to the teacher. One or more pupils may present ideas for the language experience chart. The teacher prints in neat, legible manuscript letters that which pupils have mentioned orally. After the chart has been completed, the teacher guides learners to read the printed words and sentences. Thus, the pupil's listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabularies are utilized in a language experience reading program.

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The language experience philosophy represents a psychological curriculum in that the order of ideas presented comes from involved pupils. The teacher definitely does not sequence content for learners. Language experience advocates believe that order resides in the mind of the individual pupil and not within textbooks, audiovisual aids, or programmed materials.

A relevant issue in sequence in learning pertains to the degree that a logical versus a psychological reading curriculum needs to be in evidence in the language arts.

Ediger[2] wrote:

> The teacher must select objectives, learning activities, and evaluation techniques which assist learners in developing feelings of success. Nothing is gained by having pupils develop feelings of failure. Much money is wasted each year in "teaching" pupils when they experience failure and frustration. The teacher's task is to teach pupils rather than failing or flunking individuals in the elementary school. Too often, teachers have felt that their role is to pass or fail pupils rather than guide them to achieve to their optimum. A teacher may think and feel that he has high standards for pupils when rigid standards are utilized to determine grades that pupils should receive. All teachers should realize that tests can be written which are excessively difficult and all learners in a class could receive failing marks or grades. Tests can be written which are excessively easy and most learners could get very high or excellent marks or grades. What is important is that pupils realize objectives through carefully selected learning activities. The objectives may need to be properly adjusted after a pretest has been administered in beginning a new unit of study.
>
> Pupils who experience excessive failure generally develop an inadequate self concept. They feel they can't achieve well because of experiencing much failure; thus, a lack of successful accomplishment results.
>
> Learning activities need to be adjusted to the present achievement level of each child. Careful attention needs to be paid to sequence so that pupils may experience success in ongoing learning activities. Teachers need to reward pupils with priase if each pupil is doing better than formerly. All pupils then can receive praise regardless of capacity or present achievement levels. Praise for improved performance generally spurs pupils on to greater efforts.

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[2]Marlow Ediger, Relevancy in the Elementary Curriculum. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 1975. page 11.

Organization of the Reading Curriculum

Reading could be taught as a separate subject unrelated to other curriculum areas. The separate subjects approach in organizing curricular experiences would then be in evidence. Thus, word recognition and comprehension skills would be emphasized strongly in ongoing lessons and units in reading. Adequate emphasis should also be placed upon quality literature within the framework of reading instruction.

A correlated curriculum could stress reading skills be emphasized also in one other academic area such as social studies. The skills of reading and the subject matter of social studies then become related entities.

To further relate reading skills, the fused or integrated curriculum could be stressed. Thus, reading abilities are emphasized in all academic areas. Each academic discipline such as science, mathematics, health, art, music, physical education, as well as social studies may well contribute in developing pupil proficiency in word attack skills and comprehension abilities. There is no division of subject matter in terms of separate academic disciplines when emphasizing the fused or integrated curriculum. Understandings, skills, and attitudinal goals in reading are emphasized in each and every curriculum area when possible and necessary.

Dallman[3], et. al. list specific items for teachers in aiding pupils to organize that which has been read:

In order to develop skill in organizing what is read in a content subject, the pupils might perform some of the following activities:

1. Check the correspondence between: (a) the center headings and the sideheadings of a given selection in a social studies or science book and (b) the parts of an outline the teacher has made.
2. Use the center headings and the sideheadings of books in the social studies or sciences, for practice in predicting what might be in-

cluded under each heading, and later, after having read the selection, for summarizing what is actually found under each.

3. Make an outline for a report to be given on data collected from more than one source.
4. Make an outline of a selection using the center headings and the sideheadings of a well-organized selection as determiners of the outline.
5. Make a chart summarizing the main points learned on a field trip or in the study of a unit.
6. Group the questions the boys and girls have set for study of a unit of work. For example, the teacher could list on the chalkboard whatever questions they would like answered, in whatever order the pupils name them in a study of the problem, "In what ways is Mexico a land of contrasts?" Next the teacher could explain that it may be easier to find answers to the questions if the class organizes them around main topics. Then the pupils can decide on the grouping, under the guidance of the teacher.
7. Decide upon scenes for a play that the class might be planning to give.
8. Write headlines for the front page of an imaginary newpaper written during the period of time being studied. Headlines such as these might be written: "The Oceans United" (the opening of the Panama Canal); "Indian Woman Aids Explorers" (Sacajawea): "Salem Freed of Witches" (The Salem Witch Hunt).

Induction versus Deduction

A perennial question is in evidence pertaining to methods involved in guiding pupils to acquire subject matter. Selected educators advocate students learn through an inductive method. When pupils learn with methods of induction, the teacher of reading needs to be a quality asker of questions for learners to become proficient in each word attack skill as well as in diverse comprehension abilities. A teacher using inductive methods of teaching guides pupils to learn specifics and ultimately achieve broad ideas or generalizations.

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[3]Martha Dallmann, et. al. The Teaching of Reading. Sixth Ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982, pages 289 and 290.

A teacher believing in a deductive method of teaching uses explanations and lectures frequently. The content must be clear, meaningful and sequential to pupils. Audio-visual aids may be utilized along with the spoken words. To determine if learners comprehended what was taught deductively, the teacher may discuss ideas presented with students providing feed back in terms of answers tp vital questions. A teacher written test given to learners might also provide knowledge to the teacher in terms of how well the students did in a deductive approach in teaching and learning. In deduction then, the subject matter moves from the teacher to pupils. Broad generalizations are broken down into specifics in deductive methodology.

In using inductive procedures, the following questions may be raised:

1. Is an excessive amount of time spent in teaching when a questioning method of teaching is utilized? Perhaps, in a quality explanation or short lecture, much time can be saved in having generalizations explained with clarity to pupils.

2. Do pupils have the necessary subject matter content to be able to benefit adequately in answering the numberous questions in induction procedures?

Questions and problems that arise in deductive methods of teaching include the following:

1. Is the student's attention span adequate to benefit from lengthy explanations and lectures?

2. Can a teacher utilize meaningful terms and concepts in presenting sequential content to students using deductive methods of teaching?

In Summary

There are selected issues involved in designing the reading curriculum. These include

1. What should be the breadth of content, abilites, and attitudes (or scope) in the reading curriculum?

2. Who should be involved in sequencing activities and experiences for students?

3. How should the reading curriculum be organized?

4. Which method(s) of teaching reading should be utilized in general? How can an inductive method be synthesized with deduction in terms of guiding optimal student achievement?

These issues need examining with the intent of attempting to achieve synthesis in the reading curriculum.

Selected References

Dallmann, Martha, et. al. The Teaching of Reading. Sixth ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982, pages 189 and 190.

Doll, Ronald C. Curriculum Improvement: Decision Making and Process. Fifth ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1982, page 144.

Ediger, Marlow. Relevancy in the Elementary Curriculum. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 1975, page 11.